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UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ROSA L. DELAURO

3RD DISTRICT, CONNECTICUT

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May 5, 2016

The Honorable Robert M. Califf, M.D.
Commissioner
The Food and Drug Administration
10903 New Hampshire Avenue
White Oak, RM 322346
Silver Springs, MD 20993

Dear Commissioner Califf,

I write today regarding deep concerns with the recent reports showing that Dole Food Company officials knew about a *Listeria* contamination in their facility dating as far back as July 2014, yet still were allowed to process ready-to-eat salads. Given that consumers have been severely sickened, and even killed, by salads produced at this facility, I urge you to immediately shut down the Dole Springfield plant. Their blatant disregard for the health and safety of American families shows that Dole executives put company profits first, at the expense of consumers, and this type of behavior should not be tolerated.

Listeria infections are a significant public health problem in the U.S. and can cause a range of symptoms, including fever, fatigue, miscarriages, and even death. Since the Dole salad outbreak was first reported in January 2016, thirty-three people have been infected with *Listeria*-contaminated salad. These consumers had such severe symptoms that all required hospitalization and four of them died. According to the Food and Drug Administration (FDA)'s own inspection reports into this outbreak, Dole did swab tests of surfaces in the Springfield plant in July 2014 that returned positive results for *Listeria* contamination. Additionally, at least five more times in 2014 and three times in late 2015, Dole's internal tests showed more *Listeria* contamination at the Springfield facility, but Dole kept shipping salad from this plant until January 21st of this year.

It has also been revealed that this is not the first time foodborne pathogens have contaminated this plant—reports show that Dole's Springfield facility has been the site of five *Listeria* and two *Salmonella* recalls in the U.S. and Canada for salads produced there since 2012. The fact that Dole officials were aware of a food borne illness contamination in their facility, yet continued to ship out the product, is absolutely unconscionable. People have died, and rightfully the Department of Justice has opened an investigation into Dole's Springfield plant. However, it is more than just foodborne pathogens that the FDA inspection reports point to. FDA reports

dating back to March 2014 cite at least sixteen problems that could contribute to food safety issues in the facility, including failure to provide adequate screening or other protection against pests; failure to maintain food contact surfaces to protect food from contamination by any source; and gaps in building maintenance such as peeling paint and rust, and cracks and holes in the floors. How this plant is allowed to continue operations and supply American consumers with its products is beyond comprehension.

It is an outrage that people had to die in order for Dole to temporarily close this plant for four months during the January *Listeria* outbreak. I urge you to immediately shut down Dole's Springfield facility in order to put a stop to future outbreaks from this facility. Dole must be held accountable.

Thank you for your attention to this pressing matter and I look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Rosa L. DeLauro". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress